



Department of Commerce

Innovation is in our nature.

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PLANNER'S UPDATE

Welcome to the Planner's Update, an electronic newsletter from The Department of Commerce, Growth Management Services. We send this newsletter monthly to share helpful information related to planning in Washington State.

Please feel free to send us any comments or ideas for how to make this newsletter more useful. You can also use the link below to provide additional names of planners who might like to subscribe. Please also consider sharing this newsletter with planning commissioners.

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www.commerce.wa.gov/growth
www.washington-apa.org
www.smartgrowth.org
www.planningpaw.org
www.mrsc.org

1. FINAL GROWTH MANAGEMENT WAC GUIDELINES ADOPTED BY COMMERCE

On January 19, the Washington State Department of Commerce (Commerce) adopted the review and update to the administrative rules guiding implementation of the Growth Management Act (GMA). This 2 ½ year process was the first comprehensive update since the GMA was enacted. Go to the project Web site at www.commerce.wa.gov/wacupdate for all of the project documents and the final rules. The new rules will be published in the Washington State Register on February 3, and will take effect February 19.

These rules will provide local governments with practical tools to help communities meet the challenge of maintaining livable communities in a growing region. We believe these rules are balanced, flexible, easy-to-use and directly address today's implementation challenges.

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Thanks to all who participated in the process. Your comments improved the rules considerably. The proposed rules were downloaded from the Web site over 7,000 times. We received over 300 comments on the proposed rules and we made many changes to the final rules to reflect those comments. While every individual comment could not practically be addressed in its entirety, you will see broad representation in the changes made. The “response to comments” document posted on the Web site contains all comments received along with our response to each.

In the future, Commerce anticipates rules updates approximately every two years to address changes needed due to legislation. We plan to begin the next update later this year. If you have any questions, please contact Dave Andersen, at 360.725.3052 or dave.andersen@commerce.wa.gov.

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2. LEGISLATION TO EXTEND GMA PERIODIC UPDATE DEADLINES MOVING FORWARD

In recognition of the unavailability of state grant funds for GMA Periodic Updates, the Departments of Commerce and Ecology introduced legislation (HB 2992 and SB 6611) that would extend GMA Periodic Update deadlines an additional 3 years. If this legislation is adopted, cities and counties with a deadline of December 1, 2011, would see it changed to December 1, 2014. The same 3-year deadline extension would be provided for jurisdictions with deadlines in 2012, 2013 and 2014. It would also provide a similar three-year extension for jurisdictions that had a deadline of December 1, 2010 (which had previously been extended from December 1, 2007).

As of this writing, both HB 2992 and SB 6611 appear poised to be approved by the House and Senate, respectively. Both bills would then proceed to votes in the opposite House. If one or both of the bills pass, they would be sent to the Governor to be signed into law.

For up-to-date information on the progress of these bills, see www.leg.wa.gov. If you have any questions about this legislation, please contact Leonard Bauer, Managing Director, at 360.725.3055 or leonard.bauer@commerce.wa.gov.

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3. COMMERCE STAFF TO ASSIST WITH SHORELINE MASTER PROGRAM UPDATES; PRIORITIZE GMA ASSISTANCE TO SMALL CITIES AND COUNTIES

Growth Management Services’ technical assistance program will be reduced by “loaning” two of its planners to the Department of Ecology to assist cities and counties with shoreline master program updates. This arrangement helps the Department of Commerce meet its reduced budget, and provides additional assistance from Ecology to local governments focusing on their shoreline master program updates.

The remaining staff at Growth Management Services will be reassigned to focus on assisting smaller cities and counties that have little or no planning staff. Prioritization of assistance to smaller jurisdictions was directed in the adopted state 2009-11 operating budget. Our planners will be directly assigned to assist counties with population of 75,000 or less, and cities of 10,000 or less. Requests for assistance from larger counties and cities will receive a lower priority, and we will respond to them as best we can within available resources.

We are also working with our partner in the popular Short Course on Local Planning, the Planning Association of Washington, to adjust how that educational program will be provided with a lesser time commitment from Commerce staff. We will provide more details on these adjustments as they are decided.

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While these are significant changes to our capacity, Growth Management Services remains committed to providing local governments with high-quality planning assistance and educational programs. We ask for your patience as we make these adjustments. New jurisdictional assignments of our staff planners are available at www.commerce.wa.gov/growth. If you have any questions, contact Leonard Bauer, Managing Director, at 360.725.3055 or leonard.bauer@commerce.wa.gov.

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